

## Mt. Shasta Mine



### DIRECTIONS

From the Visitor Center, take Kennedy Memorial Drive toward the dam. Stay left; do not cross the dam. The road changes names to Paige Bar Road. About one mile farther on the left, across from Peltier Valley Road, is the trailhead and parking lot.



Bat gate at mine opening.

### FEATURES

- 3.5 mile loop trail
- 540 feet elevation difference
- Splendid wildflower display (best in late March)
- Vistas of Whiskeytown Lake and Orofino Gulch
- Historic gold mines
- Restroom at parking lot
- Suitable for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians



### SAFETY

Do not enter any abandoned mine in the park. Structural integrity is unknown and hidden shafts may be loosely bridged with debris. Also snakes and other wildlife often inhabit these man-made dens.

Part of the trail is moderately strenuous and exposed,

especially in hot weather. Take drinking water and drink plenty. Creek water is not safe to drink.

Poison oak is abundant on the trail. Learn to recognize the three leaves and give it a wide berth.

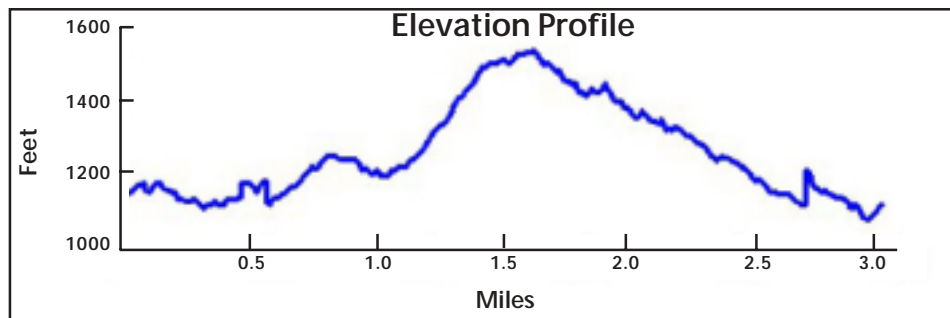
## TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The trail is a loop and therefore can be hiked or ridden in either direction. This description is based on traversing it counter-clockwise.

Much of this trail traverses an area scorched by prescribed burns in 2003 and 2004. While temporarily rendering the trailside unsightly, these prophylactic measures remove dead and down and the fine fuels that carry wildfires. Less of a fire enabler, the numerous blackened tree trunks are mostly knobcone pines, shallow-rooted trees that succumbed to high winds in 1997.

From the parking lot near the restroom, the trail is relatively flat for the first mile or so through a forest of primarily canyon live oaks and knobcone pines. White leaf manzanita, blueblossom ceanothus, and poison oak comprise much of the trailside brush.

Glimpses of Whiskeytown cemetery, with its unusual grave markers, can be seen on the right. This cemetery was relocated when the original was flooded with the creation of the lake in 1963. A little farther we come to several intersections with the Great Water Ditch Trail—a trail in the bed of a 40-



mile man-made ditch completed in 1855 for the purpose of supplying water to gold mines to the south.

At about 1.5 miles, at the bottom of a rise, a magnificent canyon live oak stands sentry near the Mt. Shasta mine. The mine is to the left; the entrance now sealed and fenced off. The original owners opened and sold the mine for \$10,000 in 1897, probably to their regret, since in the next 14 years the greatly expanded mine produced some \$178,000 of minerals from quartz ore. The ore was initially sent to the Keswick smelter for crushing and processing but around the turn of the century the owners erected a steam stamp mill with a capacity of crushing 50 tons a day. A sign at the entrance relates more information on the mine and its operation.

Just past the mine, behind a huge greenstone boulder on the left is a

lovely meadow that in late March is spectacular with yellow monkey flowers and blue dicks. A little farther the trail skirts Orofino creek, passes the Monitor mine, and the trail forks. The main trail is to the left. In spring-time a 100-foot side trip to the right is rewarded by a lovely waterfall and pool. Nearby are huge piles of quartz mine tailings.

Returning to the main trail, we follow Orofino creek upstream through trailside wildflowers of buttercups, shooting stars, pussy ears, and Indian warriors. A mine adit, possibly the Ono mine, is prominent on the left. The entrance gate is specially designed to allow passage of bats and other wildlife while preventing human transgression.

The trail turns left and begins a fairly steady uphill climb for the next 0.7 mile. The flora is mostly black, blue, and canyon live oaks interspersed with knobcone and ponderosa pines. The mountains across the canyon are, from left to right, Kanaka peak, South Fork Mountain, and Shasta Bally.

At the summit the trail intersects Orofino fuel break road overlooking Whiskeytown dam and lake with the Trinity Mountains in the distance. From here the trail gradually descends to the trailhead about a mile distant.

## GEOLOGY

*Mt. Shasta mine is on the edge of Orofino Gulch, a ravine cut through Mule Mountain stock. One geological theory holds that this stock is the remnant of the magma chamber whose volcanic action 400 million years ago formed island arcs near the continental shoreline at the time. The emitted basalt, since metamorphosed, is called Copley greenstone.*

*Much later volcanism liquefied minerals with low melting points. Subterranean pressure then transported, concentrated, and squeezed the melt into fractures in the surrounding solid rock where it eventually froze.*

*Because their melting points are similarly low—about 1050°C—gold and an impure type of quartz were two such minerals so emplaced in what became Orofino Gulch. Miners knew that where there were quartz veins, often there was gold.*

*Orofino Gulch, as its name implies, was (perhaps still is) rich in quartz and gold. A century ago, more than a half-dozen gold mines were located along its banks.*



Trailguide Author: Marion Schmitz, Volunteer

Layout & Design: Phyllis Swanson, National Park Service

Funds for printing provided by Western National Parks Association

